

## MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS IN THE INDONESIAN EFL WRITING CLASSROOM

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### Abstrak

*Meskipun motivasi dianggap penting sebagai salah satu faktor utama penentu pencapaian belajar siswa, pokok persoalan berkaitan dengan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi motivasi siswa dalam mempelajari mata kuliah tertentu, khususnya menulis Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing yang berkaitan dengan para mahasiswa Indonesia, belum dikaji secara mendalam. Kajian dalam makalah ini bertujuan untuk meneliti faktor motivasi yang dirasakan oleh para mahasiswa Indonesia di kelas menulis Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing mereka. Peserta dalam kajian ini adalah 19 mahasiswa semester pertama di kelas Creative Writing F di Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, tahun ajaran 2014/2015. Data penelitian diambil dari jurnal reflektif dimana para peserta menuliskan refleksi mereka berkaitan dengan pokok persoalan tersebut. Analisa data nampak membuktikan bahwa kinerja positif seorang guru, teman sekelas yang inspiratif, orang tua yang memotivasi, dan suasana kelas yang positif merupakan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi motivasi belajar para mahasiswa di dalam kelas mereka. Pada akhirnya, kajian ini nampak mengindikasikan pentingnya kolaborasi konstruktif antara guru, mahasiswa, dan orang tua sebagai faktor utama penentu motivasi belajar dan pencapaian akademis para siswa di dalam kelas menulis mereka.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** *motivasi, faktor motivasi, menulis Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing, kelas Creative Writing*

### Abstract

*Despite the essence of motivation as one of primary determinants for students' learning achievement, issues of factors influencing students' motivation in learning a particular subject, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing with regard to Indonesian university students, have not been discussed sufficiently. The study reported in this paper aims to explore motivational factors perceived by Indonesian university students in their EFL writing classroom. The participants of the study were 19 freshmen at Creative Writing Class F within the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University (ED-SWCU), academic year 2014/2015. Data was collected through reflective journals in which the participants wrote their reflections dealing with the issues. The data analysis appeared to prove that positive teacher's performance, inspiring classmates, motivational parents, and positive classroom atmosphere were primary factors influencing the students' learning motivation in their classroom. Finally, the present study would seem to indicate the importance of constructive collaboration among teachers, students, and parents in determining the students' learning motivation and academic achievement in their EFL writing classroom.*

**Keywords:** *motivation, motivational factors, EFL writing, Creative Writing class*

## INTRODUCTION

In the teaching and learning process at the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga, henceforth called ED-SWCU, writing is one of four skills learnt by students. As an attempt to enhance their writing mastery, ED-SWCU students, prior to their Thesis Writing, have to enroll in six initial and compulsory writing classes (Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University, 2014). In essence, Creative Writing becomes the first class that the students have to pass successfully, so they can enroll to their writing classes in upper semesters, write their thesis, and finish their study.

Some conceivable factors can ensure the students' success in their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classrooms. One can be ascribed to the students' motivation in learning their EFL writing since motivation plainly becomes one of primary determinants for students' learning achievement (Dornyei, 1994) and is regarded as a main factor that influences the success of students' foreign language learning (Ellis, 1994; McDonough, 1983). Besides, motivation is a primary factor for one's successful learning (Harmer, 2007; Reid, 2007) and "most language teachers believe that motivation is a key factor for success in language learning" (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2000, p.48). With similar views, motivation is also believed to be "a predictor of language-learning success" (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p.349). Thus, in the context of EFL writing, any attempts to find out insight into what motivates students to write become an essential issue to consider by teachers (Tran, 2007).

In essence, motivation is a complex term since it is interpreted in different ways. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece

(2008) define motivation as something that can get people going, keep them working, and help them complete tasks. Motivation is also a construct that covers:

significant goal or need, desire to attain the goal, perception that learning L2 is relevant to fulfilling the goal or meeting the need, belief in likely success or failure of learning L2, and value of potential outcomes/rewards. (Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Dornyei, 2001, as cited in Troike, 2006, p.86)

In this study, I specify motivation into substantive ideas that generally affect students' performance and success in their EFL writing class. In particular, the motivation gets them going to achieve their goal in the class, keeps them writing, helps them complete their writing tasks, and makes them believe that they can be successful in their learning.

In the discussion of motivation, Harmer (2007) distinguishes ideas between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and importantly factors influencing each motivation. He believes that intrinsic motivation comes from inside the individual, such as someone's enjoyment to a learning process and wish to make him/her feel better. The intrinsic motivation is also related to such factors as "learners' particular interests and the extent to which they feel personally involved in learning activities" (Ellis, 1997, p.76).

Conversely, some external factors affect extrinsic motivation (Harmer, 2007). Goals that students have in their learning, e.g. being able to obtain a better job, can influence their motivation. Students also tend to bring particular attitudes from a particular society in which they live when they decide to study in a class. Interestingly, people who are close to students are another external factor influencing students' motivation. In that case, the attitudes of students'

parents, siblings, and peers become crucial factors to make them feel motivated to learn. Highlighting the importance of peers, Harmer (2007) states that “if peers are enthusiastic about learning English, however, there is a much greater chance that the same student may feel more motivated to learn the subject” (p.99). Another external factor is linked to teachers who care about their students. Harmer (2007) specifically mentions that:

Students are far more likely to stay motivated over a period of time if they think that the teacher cares about them. This can be done by building good teacher-student rapport, which in turn is dependent on listening to students’ views and attempts with respect, and intervening in an appropriate and constructive way. (p.100)

In a sense, teachers’ care for their students reflects a pedagogical idea that teaching is not always a matter of transmitting knowledge to students (Harmer, 2007; Alwasilah, 2013) since they sometimes need to be listened and to be cared for (Smith, 2012). Further, students’ curiosity is another factor that affects the external motivation. In that case, students have their natural curiosity, a mild interest in who will teach them in their class and are interested in seeing how they start their English teaching for their first time.

Verifying the importance of motivation in students’ learning achievement, a plethora of international studies has been conducted to deal with students’ motivation. Oxford (1998), as cited in Dornyei and Ushioda (2001), emphasizes a role that teachers have in motivating their students to learn. In that case, the study noticed that teachers must listen to their students and directly address the course-specific aspects mentioned by the students. For that reason, teachers need to understand the close related links of their behaviors as

well as the motivation and performance of their students.

Kimura, et al. (2000) explored types of language learning motivation perceived by 1027 Japanese EFL students from different learning contexts involving junior high school students, senior high school students, junior college students, university students, and students at a private English language school. Data was collected from a 50-item motivational questionnaire based on some motivational components taken from the fields of social and educational psychology. The results would seem to show the complexity of language learning motivation due to its multiple factors covering intrinsic, integrative, and instrumental subscales.

A study by Rahman (2005) in Bangladesh aimed to determine various socio-psychological orientations, involving motivation and attitudes, of the undergraduate students who learned EFL in a private university in Bangladesh. More specifically, the researcher involved 94 undergraduate students who all are the Bangla native speakers. To collect the data, the researcher distributed a questionnaire and conducted a semi-structured interview. The findings seem to indicate that instrumental motivation, such as to obtain a job and to build a successful career was the primary factors for the students to learn the target language.

Tran (2007) conducted a study to explore 30 English major students’ motivation in their EFL writing classroom at a university in central Vietnam. In relation to motivation, the results revealed some emerging themes that emphasize the importance of teachers’ enthusiasm to provide feedback that helps students to monitor their learning progress, and of having interesting writing topics as sources of motivation.

With regard to Indonesian context, related studies have proposed some motivational factors perceived by Indonesian students. For instance, Sutantoputri and Watt (2012; 2013) provided some evidence that religiosity becomes an important part in the students' academic life since it appears to predict their motivational goals. Another study was carried out by Astuti (2013) who attempted to explore teachers' and learners' perceptions of motivational teaching strategies in two different high schools in a small town of West Sumatra Indonesia. The findings highlighted the role of the teachers in motivating their students in learning English by building positive relationships with the students and by deciding appropriate teaching materials and strategies to be applied in the classrooms. The study also appears to stress the importance of having a relaxing and encouraging classroom atmosphere as a primary determinant to be successful in foreign language learning. With similar views, Gage and Beliner (1992, p.480-485, as cited in Lopez, 2011, p.54) aver an idea that "learning is easiest, most meaningful, and most effective when it takes place in a non-threatening situation".

To sum up, the following may be stated dealing with the related literature and above-mentioned studies on motivation. First, they help me to determine a specific purpose of the present study, which is to explore conceivable factors motivating students to learn (Oxford, 1998, as cited in Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Tran, 2007; Sutantoputri & Watt, 2012; 2013; Astuti, 2013), without attempting to classify the factors into types of motivation (Kimura, et al., 2000; Rahman, 2005). Second, the related literature clarifying the definitions of motivation (Schunk, et al., (2008; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Dornyei, 2001, as cited in Troike, 2006) helps me to set a

specific idea on what motivation is and significantly to provide participants of the study with a clear idea on motivation. Last, the issues of factors influencing students' motivation in learning a particular subject, particularly EFL writing with regard to Indonesian university students, have not been discussed sufficiently. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study, reaffirming the essence of motivation in students' learning (Dornyei, 1994; Ellis, 1994; McDonough, 1983; Kimura, et al., 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Harmer, 2007), is particularly to explore the students' motivational factors in their Creative Writing class F at ED-SWCU. It can be achieved by exploring students' real experience on factors that motivate them in learning their EFL writing in their classroom without attempting to classify the factors into types of motivation, such as instrumental and integrative motivation (Dornyei, 1994; Troike, 2006; Brown, 2007) as well as internal and external motivation (Harmer, 2007).

The findings were expected to help English teachers of writing in general and other related parties to gain insights into what motivates their students to write. More specifically, the findings were to provide them with some pedagogical ideas and to help them obtain better understanding on designing classroom activities, and applying teaching strategies not only from their own knowledge but also from their interpretation of students' experience in learning EFL writing. As a result, there would be a great possibility to maintain the students' learning motivation in all the writing classes, so they can successfully pass them and finish writing their thesis, and graduate from the university.

## METHOD

This study attempts to explore the students' motivational factors in learning EFL writing in Creative Writing class F at ED-SWCU. In order to achieve its objective, the study was designed qualitatively. In particular, it implemented the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, as stated in Neuman, 2006) that briefly aims to build a theory that faithfully reflects the evidence or, in other words, to build a theory constructed from and grounded in the data. Importantly, this study also employed a situated approach that "examines how the immediate learning context influences the learners' overall disposition and how motivation, in turn, affects concrete learning process within a classroom context" (Shoaib & Dornyei, 2005, p.23). More specifically, I explored motivational factors perceived by the students in the classroom during a semester period.

### *Participants*

This study involved 19 students; (fourteen females and five males) aged from 18 to 19 years old, in Creative Writing class F at ED-SWCU. They are all the freshmen at the Study Program at 2014/2015 academic year. The selection of the participants was due to the accessibility to meet them regularly and the flexibility to conduct the study. Then, my consideration to conduct the study in the classroom was also because of the reason that exploring and finding out the motivational factors since the beginning of the semester were expected to provide teachers teaching writing classes held in upper semesters at ED-SWCU with initial understanding on the motivational issues perceived by the first semester students. This would conceivably help the teachers in designing teaching and learning activities that can motivate their students in their writing classrooms held in the upper semesters.

### *Materials*

The data was collected from the students' reflective journals. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.327) as cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p.407) indicate three primary items that can be included in a journal, namely "a daily schedule including practical matters, a personal diary for reflection, speculation and catharsis, notes on and a log of methodology". In this study, being explained a specific definition of motivation in this study (as adapted from Schunk, et al., 2008; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Dornyei, 2001, as cited in Troike, 2006), the participants wrote their personal diary clarifying their reflective responses on factors that get them going to achieve their goal in the class, keep them writing, help them to complete their writing tasks, and makes them believe that they can be successful in their learning. Hatch (2002) points out that "asking research participants to make written reflections on their experiences can be a powerful way to get another take on their perspectives" (p.140).

### *Data collection*

The data collection was done from September to November 2014 during the first semester. Initially, I asked the students to write their reflective journals in the classroom twenty to thirty minutes before the class ended. They wrote their reflective journals three times as an attempt to cover conceivable motivational factors that they experienced during their learning process at the first semester. For the purpose of the study, I asked the participants to write their journals in a monthly period. In that case, the first journal was written on Friday 26 September 2014. Meanwhile, they wrote their second and third journals on Friday 24 October 2014 and 21 November 2014. In writing the journals, the students might write their personal reflection using *Bahasa Indonesia*. That

was to ensure that they could write clear and deep reflective responses towards the motivational issues.

#### *Data analysis*

In analyzing the data of the study, I followed the qualitative data analysis procedures as asserted by Creswell (2003). Initially, I read the students' journals. Then, I underlined ideas that could indicate the motivational factors and significantly result in themes from the students' reflections. The next step was to advance the themes and to represent them in the qualitative narrative. Creswell (2003) believes that using a narrative passage to state the findings of the analysis is the most frequent approach in this step. Accordingly, I started to describe every theme and support it with excerpts of the students' reflection written in the journals. The last step was to make an interpretation or meaning of the data. In this step, I tried to convey my personal interpretation on the issues, as an attempt to answer the research question.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings on the students' motivational factors in

learning their EFL writing in Creative Writing class F at ED-SWCU. More specifically, it shows themes of the factors analyzed from the students' reflective journals. Then, the findings are presented under the following heading: students' motivational factors in their EFL writing classroom. It is further sub-categorized into positive teachers' performance, inspiring classmates, parents as a source of motivation, positive classroom atmosphere, and writing as a favorite activity.

#### **Students' motivational factors in their EFL writing classroom**

The present study reveals 106 cited responses of factors that motivate the students in learning their EFL writing in their classroom. Specifically, the responses cover 11 different themes, namely positive teacher's performance, inspiring friends, parents as a source of motivation, positive classroom atmosphere, writing as a favorite activity, and getting good mark. Other themes include interesting writing topics, working purposes, constructive feedback, studying abroad, and classroom time. Table 1 depicts the categories.

**Table 1 Analyzed motivational factors from the students' journals**

Motivational Factors	Journal 1	Journal 2	Journal 3	Total Number	Percentage
Positive teacher's performance	10	10	9	29	27%
Nice and inspiring classmates	9	9	7	25	24%
Parents as a source of motivation	6	4	2	12	11%
Positive classroom atmosphere	2	2	6	10	9%
Writing as a favorite activity	4	2	3	9	8%
Getting good mark	2	2	4	8	8%
Interesting writing topics	3	2	3	8	8%
Working purposes	1	1	-	2	2%
Constructive feedback	-	1	-	1	1%
Studying abroad	-	-	1	1	1%
Classroom time	-	-	1	1	1%
<b>Total number of cited responses</b>				<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

I continue this section by discussing four primary motivational factors, in which I include excerpts of students' reflection

written in their journals as an attempt to support and provide trustworthy discussions.

### Positive teacher's performance

The positive teacher's performance is the most frequent motivational factors in the students' classroom in which their teacher cares to them and can teach them enthusiastically:

The teacher is kind. His teaching is easily understood, so we can understand the explained materials well and positively. Besides, there are good things to discuss, so we never feel bored in the class. The teacher is also care and kind to students in his classroom. (S6/J1/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

The teacher really cares and loves us. I like those kinds of things. He always motivates me, so I keep enthusiastic. I want to prove that I am able to do it, so he will not be disappointed. (S7/ J1/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

The teacher teaches well; explains learning materials clearly, so the materials can be understood easily. He also motivates me to express ideas and to have good written work. (S8/ J3/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

Another motivational factor is the fact that the teacher starts his class with a prayer and reminds his students to pray during their learning process. The teacher also asks the students to have close relation with their parents and to thank them:

He always motivates his students to do anything enthusiastically. Besides, he does not forget to remind us to pray for and thank our parents. (S11/ J2/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

I feel motivated because my teacher often reminds us to study hard and to graduate soon. He also

often reminds us to pray for our parents and always thank them. (S16/ J2/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

We always start the class with a prayer. That is the most important thing that makes this class different and its atmosphere feel livelier compared to other classes. Indeed, this class makes me feel motivated to develop my writing skill continuously. (S6/ J3/ PTP/ translated by the researcher)

It is noteworthy that the positive teacher's performance in the classroom is the primary factors that motivate the students in learning their EFL writing. This is consistent with the results of Oxford (1998) as cited in Dornyei and Ushioda (2001); Astuti (2013) pertaining the role that teachers have in motivating their students, by building good and warm relationships with them. The finding also reinforces the idea of extrinsic motivation in which teachers who care about their students can conceivably help them stay motivated over a period of time (Harmer, 2007). The finding would also seem to concur with a pedagogical idea that teaching is not always a matter of transmitting knowledge to students (Harmer, 2007; Alwasilah, 2013) since they sometimes need to be listened and to be cared for (Smith, 2012).

Interestingly, the journals also provide some evidence that religiosity believing God's help during the learning process takes an essential role in motivating the students. They do appreciate that their teacher starts the class with a prayer and reminds them to pray. This finding appears to share Sutantoputri and Watt's (2012; 2013) belief that religiosity becomes an important part in the students' academic

life since it possibly predicts their motivational goals.

### **Inspiring classmates**

Classmates in the writing class are another primary motivational factor that the students reflected in their journals. Majority of the students feel that they have nice friends with whom they enjoyably discuss and share constructive ideas in writing their written work:

I have cool and nice classmates who indirectly motivate me to write something well. Good friends, good mood, good writing!  
(S9/ J2/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

Classmates in Creative Writing class are fun to talk with. They are able to share ideas in writing some written work such as Haiku, poem, biography, and so on.  
(S15/ J2/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

I think my classmates really help me to think about creative things, so I am able to write.  
(S6/ J3/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

My classmates are very active and helpful in giving comments and feedback. I can discuss with them. In this way, I can write enjoyably.  
(S14/ J3/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

Some students assert that positive writing performance done by their classmates in the writing class indirectly motivates them to perform better.

It is because of my friend, Zizi. I think that she is very smart in writing. She has brilliant words and ideas. Therefore, I want to keep motivated to write, so I can be like her.  
(S7/ J1/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

It is because my friends' good written work. That really influences me. I think that if my friends can do it, why I cannot do so. We have the same brain and soul. Therefore, I have to be able to write well like what my friends do.  
(S4/ J2/ NIC/ translated by the researcher)

The students do not deny that classmates are another primary factor motivating them to write. In that case, they can communicate well and share constructive ideas with their classmates. Positive writing performance done by their classmates in the classroom also affects the students' motivation to write. This finding accords with Harmer's (2007) argumentation that students' peers are crucial in motivating the students to learn. More specifically, if the peers enthusiastically learn English, there will be great possibilities that the same student feels more motivated to learn the subject.

### **Parents as a source of motivation**

The journals reveal that parents mean a lot in motivating the students to learn their EFL writing in the class. The students do remember what their parents say to them and realize what they have done for their study. Therefore, they do not have reasons not to work hard and to perform their best in their writing class:

The limitation of my knowledge on English makes me feel difficult to express ideas I have in my writing. She is my mom who motivates me to stay. Though it is difficult, I try to understand and find out ways, so I can master the language like what my other friends do.  
(S1/ J1/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

It is because of my parents who always give me spirit. When I remember what my mom has said



to me, I can just write something that I have never thought before.  
(S4/ J1/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

I keep writing because my father ever told me that young people must be productive and not become the consumptive one. I start to think that what he said is right. From that moment, I start to look for doing productive things. I realize that I am an ordinary person, not smart, not talented in something that can produce things and money. What I can do is only writing. Therefore, I have been struggling to produce and to write something, so I can become a daughter that my late-father wanted.  
(S9/ J1/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

My parents have already spent a lot of money to pay my study. Without them, I am sure that I would consider my study as an insignificant thing for me. I just don't care if I get a bad score in the class or if I have to re-take the class next year.  
(S4/ J2/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

Some students also admit that they want to make their parents feel happy and proud of them. Therefore, they have to do their best in their writing class:

I really want to make my parents feel proud. My father has monitored my study since I was child without any compulsion. I am very lucky to have parents who do their very best for me. I also want to do my best for them.  
(S2/ J3/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

I want to make my parents feel happy. I also want to make their dream come true. It is a dream

when I am able to write something in English correctly.  
(S7/ J3/ PSM/ translated by the researcher)

The finding is in line with the views that people who are close to students (Harmer, 2007) can possibly affect their learning motivation. In that case, the attitudes of people who are close to them, such as their parents, siblings, and peers are crucial factors to make them feel motivated to learn.

### **Positive classroom atmosphere**

Another source of motivation frequently stated by the students is positive classroom atmosphere. In that case, the effective number of students in the classroom and enjoyable classroom atmosphere in which the students can support each other affects the students' motivation:

A thing that develops my inspiration to write is the supportive classroom atmosphere. It is not too strict and relaxing.  
(S14/ J1/ PCA/ translated by the researcher)

The classroom atmosphere is very fun. We can help each other in writing a text. Besides, we can also correct each other's written work. I found that it was an interesting thing from this class. We can help each other.  
(S8/ J3/ PCA/ translated by the researcher)

The enjoyable classroom atmosphere and a few number of students in the classroom makes me feel more enthusiastic to write. In the next semester, I hope the total number of students in the class should not be added in order to keep the learning atmosphere remain conducive.  
(S9/ J3/ PCA/ translated by the researcher)

This finding would seem to reinforce the importance of having a relaxing and encouraging classroom atmosphere that becomes a key to be to be successful in foreign language learning (Astuti, 2013). It is also in harmony with a belief that a non-threatening situation would make learning become easy, meaningful, and effective (Gage & Beliner, 1992 as cited in Lopez, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

This study attempted to explore the students' motivational factors in their classroom. In essence, the findings would seem to indicate that positive teacher's performance, inspiring classmates, motivational parents, and positive classroom atmosphere are the primary factors affecting the students' learning motivation in their classroom. In that case, the findings of the present study are expected to open up silent ideas in the literature dealing with the factors motivating the Indonesian university students in their EFL writing classroom since the students' inspiring classmates and motivational parents, as less frequently cited motivational factors in the literature, primarily influence the students' motivation. Eventually, the interconnections among the essence of students' motivation and the findings of the present study appear to prove the importance of constructive collaboration among teachers, students, and parents in determining the students' learning motivation and academic achievement in their EFL writing classroom. As a part of the collaboration, teachers can start to think about having informative and constructive interactions with students' parents, so they can constructively inform the parents how well their sons or daughters perform particularly in writing classe. They are also interactions in which the teachers ask the parents to

participate actively in encouraging their sons or daughters to do their very best in all writing classes, so they can achieve their goal in learning EFL writing.

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